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GREECE AT THE PEACE TABLE

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To paraphrase Terence, *Graeci nihil a nobis alienum puto*. Surely, therefore, the fate of the lands that gave birth to the Greek spirit cannot be without interest to the members of this Association. Nor can we be indifferent to the condition of the heirs of the people to whom we owe so much of what is best in our civilization. If the struggles of Greece to be free could rouse our grandfathers to enthusiasm a hundred years ago, we of today should be false to our traditions if we did not sympathize with the ambitions of new Greece to complete the work then begun. Lastly our longing for the peace of the world should lead us to want the Balkan Question settled definitely, and nothing is really settled till it is settled right. There is no question of the overthrow of autocracy. The Greeks of today are democratic to the bone, and, for all they have a king, their government is more democratic than ours. The problem is the distribution of the estate of the Sick Man of Europe. In the Balkan Peninsula as in Mid-Europe it lies before the Great Powers to compose national ambitions and unite sundered peoples. To consider with you the hopes and claims of the Greeks is the object of this paper.

First of all, it is essential to grasp the fact that now as in ancient times Greece means something besides the lower part of the Balkan Peninsula. If in ancient times this region was pre-eminently Greece, none the less wherever Greeks lived was also Greece. In particular, the islands of the Aegean were as Greek as the Peloponnese, its northern and eastern shores scarcely less so. Today, too, the language, culture, and ideals of the islands are as truly Greek as those of the Peninsula, and the northern and eastern shores, if not exclusively, are at least predominantly, Greek.

The truth is that the Aegean Basin is a geographical unity. It constitutes a great mountain complex, depressed by some

great cataclysm of nature and its center submerged beneath the sea. The high peaks still stand out as islands and mark the direction of the ancient ranges. For us continentals it is hard to realize that the sea, instead of being a divider, is here a uniter of peoples. Roads in the Aegean mountains to this day are few and bad, but the sea is warm and beautiful, a highway ready built, alluring to trade and travel. From Athens the way to Smyrna was and is quicker and easier than to Acarnania and the feeling of kinship far stronger. The Greek Peninsula, indeed, faces east and the coast of Asia Minor faces west. That even today the Peninsula belongs to the Orient is attested by the Athenian habit of talking about going to Europe.

But are the Greeks of today really Greeks at all? The answer is vital not only to our interest in their claims at the Peace Table but to the inherent justice of those claims.

Beyond doubt the population of ancient Greece suffered fearful diminution. From 750 to 550 B.C. there was extensive emigration through corporate colonization beyond the Aegean round the Euxine and the Mediterranean, as far east as Sinope, as far west as Saguntum. Individual emigration on a large scale followed the conquests of Alexander and the establishment of Roman supremacy. The Greeks were prolific, but well-nigh incessant wars, exhaustion of the soil, malaria, bad government, wrought a depopulation that even in the time of Plutarch left the Greek cities but shadows of their former selves.

On the other hand population was increased by a constant influx of slaves from every quarter and by invaders and conquerors in an unending succession. Gauls in the third century B.C.; Romans from the second; Goths in the third and fourth centuries of our era; Huns in the fourth and fifth; Slavs and Avars in the sixth, seventh, and eighth; Bulgars in the tenth; Vlachs in the eleventh; Sicilian Normans in the eleventh; Venetians from the twelfth; Franks in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth; Turks from the fifteenth; Albanians from time to time—the bare list leaves one gasping. If some of the invading hosts passed on, leaving few settlers behind, others, especially the Slavs in the northwest and in the Peloponnese, remained in large numbers.

In view of the previous depopulation the Greek stock must have become just a bit diluted.

Yet our judgment as to whether Greek nationality has disappeared will depend on what we mean by nationality.

Many people seem to think that nationality is the same thing as race. But race is a matter of physique. Of race the best criteria seem to be these: stature; the shape of the head; the color of the hair, eyes, and skin. Judged by these criteria the races of Europe are much mixed; but, leaving out of consideration the Finns, Magyars, Tatars, Turks, and Jews as being Asiatics, three great European stocks can be made out: Nordic, long-headed, blonde, and tall; Alpine, round-headed, dark, of moderate height; Mediterranean, long-headed, dark, short. Scandinavia presents the purest type. France is Nordic in the northeast, Alpine in the center, Mediterranean in the south. Germany is Nordic in the north, Alpine in the south. The British Isles are Nordic and Alpine. Italy and Greece show all three stocks. If nationality depend on race therefore, Greek nationality has no distinctive basis. But in that case neither has French nor German nor British nor Italian.

A better criterion of nationality than race is language. Language usually implies like-mindedness, usually common memories, usually a common civilization.

The German feeling is well expressed by Arndt in his famous *Des Deutschen Vaterland*:

Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?
So nenne mir das grosse Land!
So weit die deutsche Zunge klingt
Und Gott im Himmel Lieder singt,
Das soll es sein!
Das, wacker Deutscher, nenne dein!

Of the French, Mrs. Edith Wharton writes in her *Fighting France* (p. 232):

It is not too much to say that the French are at this moment drawing a part of their national strength from their language. The piety with which they have cherished and cultivated it has made it a precious instrument in their hands. It can say so beautifully what they feel that they find strength and renovation in using it; and the word once uttered is passed on, and carries the same help to others.

As to ourselves Wordsworth's splendid lines are familiar:

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.¹

Hear, too, the contemporary Sir Walter Raleigh:

Our speech is our great charter. Far better than in the long constitutional process whereby we subjected our kings to law, and gave dignity and strength to our Commons, the meaning of English freedom is to be seen in the illimitable freedom of our English speech.²

Even stronger has been the feeling of the men who speak Greek. From the earliest times they regarded those who did not speak Greek as mere babblers, *barbaroi*. And well they might be proud of the euphony of their language, its flexibility, its exactness, its power of internal development, for in these respects no other language is its equal. Nor has any other shown so great virility and endurance. Egyptian has died, and Hebrew, and Phoenician. And Latin has changed to Romance. But Greek boasts a written history of nearly three thousand years, superseding tongue after tongue in the eastern Mediterranean, including imperial Latin itself, and along with the church keeping alive the fires of Greek culture through all the black ages of Turkish despotism. If the land was harassed by invading barbarians, they ended by losing their own tongue for the most part and speaking Greek.

If, then, language be the test of nationality, the Greeks assuredly are Greek, so Greek that they make us laugh by their feverish eagerness to rid the language of everything not Greek.

But even language is not a final test of nationality. The Alsatians speak German, but they are more French than the French. In America we have eight million people who do not speak our language, but most of them would deny being un-American. There is no such thing as a Swiss language, but the people of Switzerland will be called nothing but Swiss. Most Belgians speak French and most Irishmen speak English, but that does not make the Belgian French nor the Irishman English. Indeed,

¹*Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, I, 16.

²*Some Gains of the War*, p. 21.

conquest, religious movements, political oppression, business, travel, have brought about a mixture so complete that we shall have to find a better test for nationality than either race or language.

The truth is that nationality is a matter of psychology. "Nationality," says Henry Sidgwick, "is the consciousness of belonging to one another, of being members of one body, over and above what they derive from the mere fact of being under one government."¹ "A nation," says Renan more poetically, "is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, that, to be sure, make but one, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the possession of a rich legacy of memories, the other the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to make effective the inheritance that has been received undivided."² To put it plainly, a man belongs to the nation to which he thinks he belongs.

Judged by the last standard, Greek nationality is most undoubtedly Greek. Search the world over and you will hardly find a people more acutely conscious of nationality than the Greeks, more patriotic, more enthusiastic to unite into one power all the lands of Greek feeling. Their ancestors could not unite even against the barbarian Persians. In our time the Ionian Islanders were eager to abandon the flesh-pots of British prosperity to join a state so weak that it could not stand alone.

If the Greek claims in Paris cannot be understood without a consideration of the geography of the Aegean Basin and the right of the inhabitants to the name of Greeks, it is equally necessary to recall certain salient points in the history of new Greece.

First of all comes the struggle for independence. It is amazing that, after so many centuries of Turkish oppression, the Greeks retained enough vitality to rebel against their still mighty masters. The struggle was disgraced by many inhuman outrages on their foes and by factious strife among themselves. Success was won in the end only by the intervention of the Great Powers. There remains, nevertheless, a marvelous record of persistence, of heroism, of sacrifice.

¹ *The Development of European Polity*, p. 26.

² *Qu'est ce qu'une Nation?*

In the next place, fearful difficulties awaited the new state. The land, always poor in resources, was now utterly desolate, much of the best blood of the people had been shed, there was a crushing load of debt, political experience was almost wholly lacking, the jealousies of an extreme democracy paralyzed effort, the mass of the people were pitifully poor and ignorant, the territory embraced in the new boundaries was inadequate to the maintenance of an efficient state, and the thought that the Greek lands still unredeemed contained more Greeks than the new state itself kept men's minds in a constant ferment and diverted attention from home needs. It is no wonder that the new state made slow progress. The wonder is that it continued to exist at all. Yet progress was steady. The autocratic stupidity of Bavarian Otto and the calculated inactivity of Danish George could not stop it. Even the horrible fiasco of the Turkish War of 1897 was not a permanent setback. Population and wealth increased, education became general, agriculture and trade were fostered, railroads were built, the remains of antiquity were cherished and studied, a scholarship and literature were developed that won the respect of the world.

Meantime the great idea of the union of all Greek lands with the mother-country possessed Greeks everywhere with greater and greater intensity. Europe at first laughed at such fervid zeal and then grew angry at such a dangerous undertaking. But wherein was it a less laudable ambition than the ideal of United Italy? Was freedom for Greek islands from Mohammedan Turkey less urgent than for Venice from Christian Austria?

But the great idea seemed no more than a dream till the coming of Venizelos. In this remarkable man appeared a veritable Moses to lead his people into the Promised Land. A Cretan by birth and rearing, his acceptance as a leader at Athens attests the unity of Greek feeling. His shrewdness and powerful oratory have made him the most successful of politicians; his steadfastness of purpose, his breadth of vision, his solid ability, his honesty, give him a place among statesmen of the first rank. Coming to power at a time when faction seemed likely to destroy the Greek state, he saved the throne, revised the constitution, established the civil service on a merit basis, reformed education, made a new army

and navy, promoted economic prosperity, and inaugurated strong government at home and abroad. Most amazing feat of all, chiefly through his diplomacy was organized the Quadruple Alliance of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro, that defeated Turkey so disastrously in 1912. That his further ambition of a permanent federation of the Balkan states failed was no fault of his. Against the interference of Austria which prevented the Balkan states from settling their own boundaries in their own way, and the disappointment of Bulgaria which brought about the treacherous attack of 1913, even his moderation and reasonableness could not contend. No wonder that Venizelos is the idol of the Greeks. To him they owe the redemption of Crete and most of the other islands, Southern Epirus, and Macedonia with the great city of Saloniki.

With the old king George, Venizelos' influence was supreme, but in the new king Constantine he found an implacable opponent. Not for nothing had Constantine been educated at a German military school and married the Kaiser's sister. From the start he was determined to rule as well as reign and to earn the plaudits and largess of his imperial brother-in-law. Restrained neither by his accession oath to support the constitution nor by gratitude to Venizelos for his extraordinary services both to the royal family and to the nation, Constantine's ability and his popularity, won in the Balkan Wars, made him long master of the situation.

At the opening of the Great War, Venizelos as premier took at once a position of neutrality friendly to the Entente. His naturally French sympathies, his indignation at German crimes, his distrust of Bulgaria, the alliance of his country with Serbia, made impossible for him any action favorable to the Central Powers. With regard to Serbia in particular he rejected with scorn a proposition from the Germans looking to an attack from the rear. "Greece," he said, "is too small a country to commit so infamous an act."

Into the intricacies of the part played by Greece in the war there is no need to enter. It is sufficient to say that Venizelos consistently favored carrying out the terms of the alliance with Serbia and joining the Allies, while Constantine was restrained

from joining Germany only by fear of the allied fleets. At first the national sentiment was generally with Venizelos. If later a large section supported the King, the Allies were really responsible for it.

The initial blunder of the Allies lay in misreading Turkish policy. In view of Russian ambitions with regard to Constantinople, the Turks had a strong natural leaning toward Germany, which the Allies ought to have realized and, by strong measures if necessary, checked at the start.

In the next place, to placate Bulgaria ought to have been recognized as hopeless from the beginning. The German Ferdinand was in control, and his pan-Germanism was sure to find a ready response in the popular hatred of Serbia.

Next, Venizelos should have been supported vigorously throughout. Of his loyal support there could be no doubt. On the other hand, the King's sympathies were known to be with the Germans.

Next, the King should have been forced to abdicate in October, 1915, instead of June, 1917. Having undertaken by repeated treaties to support and protect Greece, the Allies were not only justified in maintaining the constitution against the King's usurpation but morally bound to do so.

Next, the Dardanelles attack, badly planned and stupidly even if heroically executed, was a grievous blow to allied prestige.

Bewildered by such stupendous ignorance and folly, misled by a most active pro-German propaganda, and browbeat or cajoled by an unscrupulous king, it is not surprising that many Greeks turned away from the Allies. Allied defeat seemed probable, if not certain, and prudence suggested a waiting policy. Even so, when Venizelos raised the standard of revolt against the King many thousands of volunteers joined him. When at last the French had forced the abdication of Constantine, when Venizelos had come back into power and there was opportunity to learn the truth, the nation as a whole joined the Allies with enthusiasm and the Greek army took a notable part in the campaign in Macedonia. It does not, therefore, seem just to bring up the actions of the pro-German party in the first two years of the war against the claims of the whole nation at the end.

What now are the Greek claims? They were presented with great ability by Venizelos at the Conference of 1919. In a nutshell they amount to this: the union with Greece, so far as is practicable, of all Aegean lands now prevailingly Greek in language, culture, and sympathies. They rest in general on the doctrine of the right of peoples to determine their own government and on the eleventh and twelfth of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which were offered by the Allies and accepted by the Central Powers as the basis of peace, as follows:

11. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

12. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be secured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

Venizelos says:

All told, the Hellenic nation comprises 8,256,000 souls, of whom 55 per cent live in the Kingdom of Greece and 45 per cent outside its limits. The inclusion of the million Greeks scattered all over the world is, of course, out of the question. Let us consider, then, the Greek populations of the Balkan Peninsula, of Asia Minor, and of the Islands.¹

1. *Northern Epirus.*—

Northern Epirus comprises a mixed population of 230,000. Greece maintains that this mixed population ought necessarily to be allotted to her, for it would be contrary to all equity that a majority with a higher civilization should have to submit to a minority with an inferior civilization. One may be tempted to raise the objection that a substantial portion of this Greek population has Albanian as its mother tongue, and is consequently, in all probability, of Albanian origin; but the democratic conception of the Allied and Associated Powers cannot admit of any other criterion of nationality than that of national consciousness. Notwithstanding that the majority of them speak Albanian, the Greeks in Northern Epirus have formed part of

¹ "Greece before the Peace Conference of 1919," *Publication No. 7 of the American-Hellenic Society*.

the Greek family for centuries, long before the foundation of the Kingdom of Greece. They furnished, in the course of the War of Greek Independence, many of the military leaders of the revolted nation. One of the finest pages in the history of Greece records the “dance of Zalongo,” where the women of Souli, whose mother tongue was Albanian, threw themselves from the height of a steep mountain, after having cast their own children into the abyss, in order not to fall into the hands of the Mohammedan Albanians, who were besieging their country.¹

2. *Thrace*.—With regard to Constantinople itself, Venizelos desires that it shall be Greek because its Greek population is in numbers only slightly inferior to the Turkish and because the city, first as Byzantium and then as the capital of the Eastern Empire, was for two thousand years pre-eminently a Greek city, but, recognizing the demand that it be constituted an international state, he does not press the claim. What his feelings are now, since the Powers decided that the Turk should continue to hold the city, we had perhaps better not inquire. For myself, this unwillingness, based on cowardice and jealousy, to rid Europe forever of the polluting presence of a people hopelessly incapable of efficient and just government of other races and stained with the blood of millions of murdered and despoiled victims seems nothing short of calamitous. After five hundred years of Europe the Turk is as much of an Asiatic as ever and should by the verdict of disinterested civilized man be sent back whence he came. One blushes for the factious blindness that vitiates the influence of the wealthiest and most powerful of nations, the one disinterested Great Power, on behalf of justice.

Thrace, outside of the vilayet of Constantinople, Venizelos does claim and, as it seems to me, with justice. The population of the vilayet of Adrianople, which comprises all Thrace left to Turkey after the Balkan Wars except the vilayet of Constantinople, was, he says, by Turkish statistics taken before the Great War, 1,026,873, consisting of 366,363 Greeks, 508,311 Turks, 107,843 Bulgarians, 24,060 Armenians, 19,300 Jews, and a few others. Many thousands of the Greeks have been massacred by the Turks and many more have fled for the time being. But surely it is out of the question to allow the Turks by violence and frightfulness to secure a majority

¹ *Ibid.*

of the whole and then claim the rights of a majority. One might as well admit that a man who had murdered all his brothers and sisters had as sole heir the right to his father's entire estate.

Turkish domination being ruled out by Wilson's twelfth point and by the verdict of disinterested humanity, there are left for Thrace three possibilities: union with Greece, union with Bulgaria, a mandate to one of the Great Powers. The latter is excluded by the unwillingness of America to act and by the unwillingness of the others to let any Power but America act. The choice would seem to lie between Greece, with some 366,000 nationals, and Bulgaria, with about 107,000. The only thinkable ground for doubt would be the possible impolicy of cutting off Bulgaria from the Aegean entirely. But, first, Bulgaria until 1913 never had an outlet on the Aegean except for some seventeen years in the Middle Ages; second, Bulgaria has a good sea outlet on the Euxine, and free passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles is assured to all nations; third, Greece agrees to guarantee trade privileges through an Aegean port equal to those enjoyed by Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Poland through their nearest ports; fourth, Bulgaria by her treachery to Serbia and Greece in 1913 and her behavior in the Great War, has forfeited every claim to any indulgence whatever.

3. *Asia Minor*.—The vilayet of Trebizond, by Turkish antebellum statistics, cited by Venizelos, contained 353,533 Greeks, but it is so far away from Greece that Venizelos concedes its inclusion in a new Armenia to be established as a mandate of one of the Great Powers.

Besides the 353,000 Greeks in the vilayet of Trebizond there are several hundred thousand more living in districts predominantly Turkish. For these Venizelos hopes that an exchange of lands can be arranged with the Turks living in territory now Turkish but predominantly Greek and therefore, as he hopes, to be incorporated with the new Greece. The suggestion seems the more plausible because the European Turks, as their districts have come under Christian rule, have usually preferred to return to lands under Turkish control, even when subjected to no compulsion.

The west coast of Asia Minor and the adjacent territory, as has been already pointed out, are geographically a part of the submerged mountain complex that constitutes the Aegean Basin. It is, therefore, geographically connected with Greece. Historically, it has been Greek for three thousand years. Hence sprang the first poets, Homer, Callinus, Mimnermus, Phocylides, Hipponax, and Anacreon; the early philosophers, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Xenophanes, and Parmenides; the fathers of history, Hecataeus and Herodotus. Here was one of the greatest of ancient libraries. Here were created some of the most wonderful works of ancient architecture and sculpture. Here were enacted some of the most stirring scenes of the early Church. Here still dwelt before the Great War, according to Venizelos, 1,188,359 Greeks. This district Venizelos asks to be united with Greece. Again, in my judgment, with right. Considerations of geography, history, language, national feeling, combine to demand it. It is true that there dwell here more than a million Mohammedans also. This is a pity, but certainly a minority should not rule a majority and still less a Turkish minority a European majority. A great outcry has been made against Greek control on the ground of injustice to the Turks of the Asia Minor highlands in cutting them off from the Aegean. But they would have full access to the Euxine and the Sea of Marmora, and Greece would guarantee them ample trading rights in Smyrna itself. In any case, wherein do they deserve greater consideration than Austria or Hungary?

4. *The islands.*—Last of all the Greeks claim Rhodes and Cos and the rest of the Dodecanese. Here, so far as I can see, there is absolutely nothing to be said in opposition. The islands are geographically as like the other Aegean islands as one pea in a pod is like the others. Historically they have been Greek as far back as recorded history runs. Their population is almost wholly Greek and as pure in strain as anywhere else in the whole Aegean Basin. Italy has no just ground whatever for their possession. She occupied them professedly as a temporary measure in her war with Turkey in 1911 and, remaining still in occupation, prevented Greece from seizing them in the First Balkan War as she seized Chios and the rest. The population is eager for the

change. If the doctrine of the right of self-determination has any meaning whatever, it is applicable here.

Such are the Greek claims. They seem to me both just and moderate. If they are granted, the Aegean Basin will be at last a political as well as a geographical entity. The greater portion of the Greek people will be united into a single state. That they will be worthy of their traditions and of their freedom the history of their renaissance makes entirely probable. Indeed, Greece seems to present altogether the best hope for the ultimate control of Constantinople itself and the leadership of a Balkan Confederation that will secure the peace of the eastern Mediterranean and its protection against a possible fresh Mohammedan advance.